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ABSTRACT

This analysis describes the phonology and grammar of the contact vernacular referred to as Roper Creole, spoken at Ngukurr on the Roper River. The analysis deals primarily with the creole used between native Roper Creole speakers. The phonology is similar to that of the Aboriginal languages of the area, with the addition of a few English sounds. Pronouns, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, affixes, etc. are of English derivation, but are patterned in use after the local Aboriginal languages. Three texts are presented as examples of Roper Creole speech. (Author/AMH)

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by

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NOTES ON THE "PIDGIN ENGLISH" CREOLE OF ROPER RIVER*

M.C. SHARPE

Most Aboriginals resident at Ngukurr (Roper River Settlement) during my visits there in 1966-68 speak as their first language (if younger) or usual language of communication (if older) a creole language which they refer to as Pidgin English (henceforth referred to as PE in this paper). Those fluent in English clearly differentiate the two and rarely mix them; those less fluent in English will speak a mixture of English and PE (the proportion varying with their familiarity with English) to visiting non-Aboriginals. However, almost all of them, including the most fluent in English, respond with more ease and with greater precision if the non-Aboriginal uses PE rather than English.

Two such creoles are reported from Bagot Settlement, Darwin, and, if information from others, many not being linguists, is correct, very similar creoles are spoken in other areas of the Northern Territory where there are cattle stations. Some are less mutually intelligible with English, the degree of mutual intelligibility varying with the degree of contact with white Australians. It is higher at Roper River than at Nutwood Downs and Hodgson Downs cattle stations, for example.

My elderly informant at Ngukurr, Mr Barnabas Roberts, an Alawa tribesman (now deceased), told me that stockmen brought PE to the Territory from the Queensland canefields in the last century, during the time when South Sea Island labourers were brought there. (As some of these workers took this lingua franca, known as Beach-la-Mar, back to New Guinea, it has presumably exerted some influence on the emergence of Neo-Melanesian.)

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*This article also appears in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies NEWSLETTER New Series No. 2, June 1974. A few details have been updated here.

My informant told me this pidgin became a lingua franca at Ngukurr at its inception as a mission in 1908, when Aboriginals from a dozen or so tribes found refuge there. It has become much more anglicised with increasing contact with white Australians. It is, however, still distinct from English as a language, unlike Queensland Aboriginal English dialects (referred to here as AbE), which are dialects of English.

In support of its relationship with Neo-Melanesian, similarities in structure and also in specific words can be adduced. For example, the usual PE word for *'food'* at Ngukurr is **daga**, and for *'eat'* is **dagad dagad**. PE speakers recognised **kaikai** (Neo-Melanesian for *'food, eat'*) as the old word in their PE. **buji** *'if'* in PE seems derived from **sposim** in Neo-Melanesian by the phonological rules of the language.

There is also much in Queensland AbE which is reminiscent of PE, so much so that it seems most likely that AbE evolved from a pidgin English, and one very similar to Roper PE. The PE word for *'old woman'* (apparently from English) is **ulgumen** (or **olgomen**), which is also known and used by some AbE speakers in Central Queensland. The expression **jaya lug** *'it's there, see!'* is used with the same intonation in both PE and AbE. There are other shorter expressions used in both PE and AbE with the same phonology and intonation.

Some older Queensland Aboriginals do indeed still use a pidgin.[1] It appears that for the less isolated communities, this pidgin has evolved into a dialect of English. A similar process may well be going on at Ngukurr, which, if conditions had not changed, would produce a variant dialect of English within a few generations.

This suggested connection of PE with Beach-la-Mar is disputed by Flint,[2] who on good historical grounds shows:

1. Beach-la-Mar, developing in the 18th century in the Pacific "is the direct ancestor of Solomon Island Pidgin and New Guinea Pidgin, though it shows many differences from both",[3] and New Guinea Pidgin (Neo-Melanesian) was well established in north-west New Guinea by the 1880s.
2. The Pidgin spoken on the canefields was brought by Pacific Island labourers from 1863 onwards. Only between 1876 and 1884 were New Guinea labourers brought in.
3. "Long before 1880 - when both Kanaka Pidgin and New Guinea Pidgin were developed - the original Australian Aboriginal Pidgin was already established in all areas of white settlement, including the Northern Territory."[4]
4. The Islanders despised the Aboriginals and had very little contact with them, therefore the language could hardly have been transferred.

It may therefore be that the pidgin Mr Roberts said was brought by stockmen was not that of the canefields, though one may have influenced the other through white contacts. My informant was old enough to remember the early years of this century, and to have met and heard accounts from older people at the time. He was also notable in other spheres for distinguishing hearsay from both probable and known fact, and from his own experience. His account therefore should not be dismissed merely because he is not a trained linguist or historian (or dare I say - because he is not a highly educated European?).

The writing and publishing of this paper has been delayed due to a number of factors. However, it was completed in time to be of use to another linguist (John Sandefur) now working on the creole. His transcriptions differ slightly for some words; we know now of a fourth preposition and more verb auxiliaries; he has more information on the stylistic continuum, including comments by creole speakers on how they see it; however, his data extend rather than contradict what is presented here.

PROBLEMS IN STUDYING PE

When studied in detail, PE at Ngukurr seems very variable, both with different speakers and with the same speaker on different occasions. One missionary nurse at Ngukurr, having done a short course in linguistics, had attempted to study PE. She had, however, abandoned the attempt, because as she told me, it varied so much from speaker to speaker. Flint in correspondence mentioned an attempt in the Torres Strait Islands to write their pidgin in the schools. This attempt was abandoned because of lack of agreement among speakers.

A possibility at Ngukurr was that each tribal group had a slightly different pidgin dialect, the difference being related to their own languages (and partially to the extent of contact with whites, as some tribal groups had minimal contact), or that there were two or more pidgin dialects used in different circumstances. Jernudd[5] reported three English and pidgin-type languages at Bagot Settlement, Darwin, which he referred to as Aboriginal English (a restricted form of English), Creole and Roper Pidgin. He reports:

> "The youth Creole is linguistically different from Pidgin. Creole is typologically closer to English than Pidgin since it has a similar phonology (although particularly the intonational characteristics are closer to Pidgin) and a more English vocabulary. Its syntax is basically a Pidgin syntax. Pidgin has preserved an Aboriginal-type phonology, in addition

> to sharp syntactical differences from English. It is often referred to as Roper Pidgin (from Roper River). Many schoolchildren switch between and are able to comment on the two Aboriginal English varieties, Pidgin and Creole. For them these varieties functionally stand in a diglossic relation (in addition to the diglossic relation between them and English). They use Pidgin to adults, Creole among themselves. Their Pidgin is in effect a modified Creole."[6]

Evidence at Ngukurr did not suggest two forms of creolised pidgin, in particular the same devoiced stops were used in speech to whites and among themselves, by children and adults; however, evidence does suggest a stylistic continuum with a Pidgin English at one extreme, and English at the other.

I have therefore gathered and sifted data using the two hypotheses below. The first hypothesis in particular has been applied by Flint and his associates in their analysis of Queensland Aboriginal English,[7] and appears to account very well for the speech heard there. The two hypotheses are:

1. PE and standard English form the limits of a cline or stylistic continuum, and language heard will vary in type along this cline, depending on who the conversationalists are, and, if they are an Aboriginal talking with a European (or possibly also an Aboriginal not speaking or hearing PE), with the former's ability to handle English.
2. PE speakers (and native language speakers) have the same freedom to borrow foreign words and phrases with or without adjustment in pronunciation, as English speakers have. Just as in borrowing a French phrase or word, English speakers may or may not adapt the pronunciation towards that of English, so I have assumed PE speakers may do with borrowed English phrases or words.

Applying these hypotheses means, until the linguist is fluent enough and has a sophisticated enough informant, a somewhat arbitrary assigning of expressions to PE and English. There will be some difference of opinion when informants are asked whether an expression is PE or English, or whether it is correct PE or not, according to age group. (For example, Mr Roberts complained that the younger generation do not speak PE properly, quoting their use of **bla mayn** for *'my'*.) There is also too much interference with PE, so similar to English, when questioning is done in English, so that monolingual elicitation in PE is to be aimed at. Where possible for this analysis, I have used PE utterances between native PE speakers; although the text examples given at the end of this

paper and some examples quoted were spoken to the linguist and tape-recorded, the analysis applies basically to overheard shorter utterances between native speakers. There was a marked shift in style, vocabulary and phonology in Mr Roberts' speech, for example (particularly in the early stages of my work at Ngukurr), when speaking to me or to relatives at Nutwood Downs (he also speaks good English to visiting non-Aboriginals). Excluded from study here is speech of some Aboriginal residents at Ngukurr who have come from non-PE speaking areas (such as Groote Eylandt). These have, like myself, learnt PE after they have learnt English, and their PE usage clearly betrays this fact.

PHONOLOGY

Phonologically, it appears the PE of a few decades ago had a phonology very similar to that of the languages of the area, and these had for the most part phonemes and patterning typical of many Australian languages.[8] In 1967 the phonology of the PE spoken at Hodgson Downs and Nutwood Downs was still similar to this. That at Ngukurr also permitted some English phonemes and patterns. A chart of "old" phonemes is shown in Table 1. At Ngukurr, and among some speakers elsewhere, /e/, /o/ and /s/ (and sometimes /f/ and /š/) are permitted phonemes, although /s/ often fluctuated with /ʤ/ in some words.

Tongue position is in general more retracted than in English, with the tip flattened. The rest position of the tongue is with the tip resting behind the bottom teeth, and the blade near the alveolar ridge. This lends a retroflexed quality to all alveolars.

Table 1. "Old" Phonemes of PE

	bilab	alv	retr	alvpal	velar
devoiced stops	b	d	ḍ	ʤ	g
nasals	m	n	ṇ	ñ	ŋ
laterals		l	ḷ		
liquids		ɾ	r		
semivowels				y	w
vowels				i	u
				a	

The devoiced stops bear closer resemblance to English voiced stops than to the English voiceless stops.

The retroflexed alveolars did not occur word or syllable initially.

The alveolar flap (/ɾ/) does not occur word initially. Possibly [ɾ] and [r] are in mutually exclusive distribution and therefore belong to the one phoneme.

After the alveopalatal sounds /ɟ/, /ñ/ and /y/ (actually labiodental articulation except when contiguous to alveolars), the phoneme /a/ is fronted to become phonetically [æ]. After the velars /g/, /ŋ/ and /w/, /a/ is backed to become phonetically /ɔ/.

With certain exceptions, consonant clusters are avoided word or syllable initially. In English borrowings, /i/ or a harmonising vowel was usually inserted between the consonants of an initial cluster: /silib/ or /ɟilib/ *'sleep'*, /sineg/ or /ɟineg/ *'snake'*, /bilaŋgid/ *'blanket'* and /buɾum/ *'from'*; but /bla/ or /blaŋa/ *'belonging to'*, /brabli/ *'really'* and /sdori/ *'story'*.

Stress is phonemic, although it is often predictable to English speakers. For example, /'dilib/ *'tea'*, /ɟi'lib/ *'sleep'*, /'ginu/ *'canoe'*, /ɟi'neg/ *'snake'*.

TECHNICAL ORTHOGRAPHY

The technical orthography chosen here is the same as the practical orthography on which Ngukurr residents are in substantial agreement. In all examples given below, the following conventions are followed: for /ɟ/, j; /ñ/, ny; /ŋ/, ng; /ŋg/, n-g; /ɖ/, /ɳ/ and /ɭ/, rd, rn and rl respectively; and for /ɾ/, rr. All other symbols are as in Table 1.

ADAPTATION OF ENGLISH WORDS

English words adapted into PE (often with meaning shifts) follow several patterns, which appear to have applied at different times historically, in the general order shown below.

1. Older words are adapted to the phoneme system shown in Table 1, with no initial or final consonant clusters (except with bl and br shown above). Single syllable words, other than auxiliaries, function words and clitics, are shunned.
   namu/numu *'no, don't'* (last vowel now o)
   wanim/wanem *'what'*
   -bala (adjective suffix) (from fellow)
   nugudbala *'bad'* (from no good)
   dumaji *'very'* (from too much)

buji *'if'* (presumably of common origin with Neo-Melanesian sposim)
dumarra *'tomorrow'*
jilib *'sleep'*
dilib *'tea'*

2. Some words are adapted to a system with a fourth vowel e added (Alawa has this phoneme). Sometimes this phoneme arises from contradiction of ay.
laygim/legim *'like'*
guwe *'go away'*
wanim/wanem *'what'*
bujiged *'cat'* (from pussy cat)

3. Some words where the English has s allow fluctuation of s and j; others, including those where English has j or ch etc., and some where English has s, allow only j.
sineg/jineg *'snake'*
silib/jilib *'sleep'*
basdam/bajdam *'beforehand'* (from past time, former form preferred)

but

buji *'if'* (from suppose through Neo-Melanesian)
binji *'stomach, belly'* (from English, cognate with binge)
dumaji *'very'* (from too much)

4. Some words are adapted to a five vowel system, with o added to the above four vowels, and initial consonant clusters are allowed.
sbiya *'spear'*
sdori *'story'*
olmen *'old man'*

INTONATION

In intonation PE is very similar to the local languages. The reader is referred to my *Alawa Phonology and Grammar*[9] for more detail on phonology and intonation. Briefly, conversational intonation is rather similar to that of Australian English, with rising sentence final intonation (rather than falling) on many statements, especially when an expression of attention is called for from the listener. A final intonational glottal stop is often present at the end of a phrase with such rising intonation. This glottal stop is more often present in narrative than in conversation, though it is very frequent after na

(or namu) *'no'* and ngi *'isn't it so?'* in conversation. A feature very different from English is the continuous aspect intonation, in which the voice rises to a higher pitch, either sustaining the vowel of a word (usually the verb) or repeating a word several times, with gradual increase of laryngealisation, followed by a drop to normal pitch and normal voicing.[10]

PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY

Quite a few literate adults (older and younger) had a surprisingly consistent orthography for PE. The English series of voiced stops (with j chosen for /ɟ/) was unanimously chosen for the devoiced stops. The digraph rr was chosen for the trilled or flapped liquid, ny for /ñ/, and ng for /ŋ/. (My suggestion, barely discussed with the people, for /ng/ in the rare cases when these two phonemes are contiguous, was n-g.) Spelling agreement was high on a number of words, particularly those with "old" phonemes only, but problems occurred with quite a number of words. (On my second hypothesis above, these could be English borrowings, sometimes partly assimilated in pronunciation to PE forms.) One such word was 'camp', which is now fairly commonly used at Ngukurr. By contrast, the word for *'play, pretend'*, phonetically [gʸaman], and that for *'come'*, phonetically [gaman] were spelt, with little hesitation, as gIyaman and gaman respectively.

GRAMMAR

PRONOUNS

Table 2 (opposite page) shows the basic set of pronouns of PE. First person pronouns allow variation of forms in certain positions as described below the table.

POSSESSION

The possessor is indicated by a preposed pronoun or noun, or (usually) preposed bla plus pronoun or noun, e.g. mayn ay *'my eye'*, yumob mani *'your money'*, im asbin *'her husband'*, blanga im blagbala *'his fellow countryman'*, bla wi *'ours'*.

REFLEXIVE PRONOUN

There is a reflexive pronoun mijalb, the same form for all persons and numbers.

olmen bin lujim mijalb *'The old man died'* (lit. *'lost himself'*)
melabad mijalb *'we by ourselves'*

Table 2. Pronouns

	singular	*plural*	*dual*
1st inclusive (12)	yunmi[a]	yunmalabad[b]	-
1st exclusive (1)	mi[c]	melabad[b]	mindubala
2nd person (2)	yu	yulabad[d,e]	yundubala
3rd person (3)	im	(im)alabad[f,g]	(im)dubala[f]

[a] This pronoun refers to two people, the speaker and the one spoken to, but is here listed as a singular because of its form, and because its counterparts in the local languages also pattern as such.[11]

[b] wi is sometimes found for yunmalabad and possibly melabad, as subject and also frequently following bla, e.g. bla wi *'our business'* (usually inclusive).

[c] ay may be used in subject position, e.g. ay/mi bin gu *'I went'*, and appears preferred there. mayn is used as possessive pronoun, e.g. mayn ay *'my eye'*. Younger speakers use the expression ... bla mayn *'my ...'*; Mr Roberts regards this as wrong grammar.

[d] yumob is preferred at Ngukurr for second person plural, yulabad on the cattle stations nearby.

[e] mibala, yu(m)bala, imbala are occasionally heard as plurals, even from speakers who usually use the forms listed above.

[f] im is occasionally prefixed to third person plural and dual.

[g] je *'they'* sometimes occurs.

ADJECTIVES AND NUMERALS

The suffix -bala usually indicates an adjective or numeral; some words with this suffix may also act as nouns, and some are time words.

yaribun gudbala daga *'Lilyseed is a good food.'*
nagibala *'He has no clothes on.'*
du, dubala *'two', 'they(dual)'*
thrribala *'three'*
jarra jigibala jineg *'That is a poisonous snake.'*
yalabala *'halfcaste'*
dagbala na *'It was dark/night then.'*
albala *'morning time'*

PLURALISING OF NOUNS

There is usually no alteration in form of nouns for plurals. Exceptions are the words for *'old man'* and *'old woman'*.

olmen *'old man'* olmen olmen *'old men'*
olgomen *'old woman'* olgoolgomen *'old women'*

VERBS TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE

Most transitive verbs are distinguished from intransitive verbs by the suffix -um ~ -im; the vowel is usually /u/ unless following a syllable containing the vowel /i/. Clitics -ab *'up'*, -dan *'down'*, -ad *'out'*, etc. and the continuous suffix -bad follow the -um suffix.

mi gu *'I am going'*
mi gaman *'I am coming'*
dubala bin dog la mi *'they talked to me'*
im bin basaway *'he died'*
ay bin jidan *'I sat down'*
im bin buldan *'he fell down'*
im bin jinginad la wi *'he was calling out to us'*
jangudanwe *'west'* (from sun go down way)
mi abum *'I have it'*
mi gilim *'I (will) hit it'*
mi gugum *'I am cooking/will cook it'*
yu garrim? *'have you got it?'*
mi bin megimbad *'I was making it'*
masgidu bin idimab mi *'the mosquitoes were biting badly.'*

but ay gibid yu mani *'I give you money'* (no -um)[12]

PREPOSITIONS

Three prepositions exist: langa/la *'to towards, at'*, blanga/bla *'pertaining to, property of, for the purpose of'*, and burrum *'from, in (of language)'*.[13]

langa/la ay bin jidan la im *'I camped at his place.'*
yu gin wed la mi lilbid? *'Can you wait for me a little?'*

dubala bin dog la mi *'They talked to me.'*
yu gan jinggabad langa mi *'You can't think of me.'*

blanga/bla melabad bajimab bla yu? *'Shall we fetch it for you?'*
im blanga yumob mani *'It's your money.'*
blanga im blagbala *'his fellow countryman'*
bla masgidu im gejim *'for killing mosquitoes'*
bla album gandri bla imalabad *'for the aid of their country'*

burrum mi bin gu burrum jaya *'I went on from there'*
burrum alawa *'in Alawa'*

TENSE, ASPECT AND MOOD OF VERBS

Tense, aspect and mood of verbs are shown by preposed auxiliaries and the verb final suffix -bad. The suffix indicates continuous aspect.

im bin megim ginu. *'He made a canoe.' (and finished it)*
im bin megimbad ginu. *'He was making a canoe.' (but hasn't finished it yet)*

A partial list of verb auxiliaries is given in Table 3. An unmarked verb is nonpast tense. bin is also used as the past tense of the copulative verb (there is no nonpast form).

bin im jaya *'He is there.'*
melabad bajimab bla yu? *'Shall we get it for you?'*

Table 3. Verb Auxiliaries

	Following bin *in past tense forms*
bin (past)	andi/anda *'want to'* (intention) uridi/uridu[a] *'used to'* (habitual past)
gin *'can'* gan *'can't'* maydbi *'may'*	

[a] bin must be present for this. bin uridi/uridu is sometimes replaced by yusdu.

dubala bin jaya *'Two of them were there.'*
ay bin gu la resis *'I went to the races.'*
melaban binis[14] *'We finished.'* (contraction of melabad bin binis)

gin — yu gin wed la mi lilbid? *'Can you wait for me a little?'*

gan — ay gan bajimab bla yulabad *'I can't take yours.'*

andi — mi andi gu *'I want to go.'*
im bin andi dalim mi *'He was going to tell me.'*
ay bin anda gambeg lang daym *'I wanted to get back for a long time.'*

bin urldi — ay bin urldi jidan la im *'I used to stop with him.'*
du men bin urldi gilim, degimbeg la their camp *'Two men used to kill it and take it to their camp.'*
wi bin urldu gedim dubega *'We used to get tobacco.'*
wi yusdu gam jalwada *'We used to come to Saltwater Creek.'*

The verb gu *'go'* also has an auxiliary use as in English.
yu gu jilibi *'Go to sleep!'*
(cf. wandi jilib na *'want to sleep now'*[15])

ADJECTIVE-LIKE VERBS

There may be some adjective-like verbs. If so,[16] they have no -bala suffix, in translation are classified as verbs by English speakers, yet lack tense differentiation. A suspected example is jabi *'understand'*, where no past tense form has been found to date in the data.
yu jabi? *'Do you understand?'*

NEGATIVE COMMANDS

libum *'leave it'* is used before the verb for commands to refrain from an action, namu *'don't'* in other cases.
libum! *'Stop it.'*
namu lujim *'Don't lose it.'*

MISCELLANEOUS WORD TYPES

A few examples of word types are given in the following paragraphs.
Locatives and directionals include iya *'here'*, jaya *'there'*, dije *'this way'*, jangudanwe *'west'*. Certain directional information is given in some verb suffixes, for example:
gu *'go'* gaman *'come'*

guwin *'enter, go in'* gamin *'come in, enter'*
guwab *'go up, climb'* gamab *'come up, approach'*
gudan *'go down, descend'* gambeg *'come back, return'*
guwad *'go out, go about'*
guwe *'go away'*

Time words and phrases include:
burrum jaya *'after that'* (also *'from there'*)
dumarra *'tomorrow'*
baymbay *'soon, later'*
basdam/bajdam *'in the past'*
alibala *'morning time'*

Interrogatives include:
wanim/wanem *'what'* (also in non-interrogative sense *'thingumajig, what's it'*)
waya *'where, why, how'* (also as conjunction)
wije *'which way'* (e.g. wije san? *'Where is the sun now?'*)

The most common demonstratives are dijan *'this'* and jarran *'that'*. More anglicised forms sometimes occur, e.g. jad/jed *'that'*.

Interjections and sentence words of various types occur. There is yuway *'yes'* and namu *'no'*; namu, however, is also used as a negative with verbs, etc., as noted above. wal *'well'* may introduce a sentence; orayd *'alright'* may begin or end one. jaldu indicates a particular subject of conversation is disposed of; binis/finish can also be used in this way. ngi (with intonational glottal stop concluding) is often used sentence finally when assent from the hearer is looked for by the speaker. gurdi is an expression of mild horror. bubala *'poor fellow'*, an expression of nostalgia or pity, can also be used as an adjective.

yu jabi? yuway. *'Do you understand? Yes.'*
yu garrim? namu. *'Have you got it? No.'*
... jan barnim. orayd. *'... the sun is hot. OK.'*
wal, im bin dalim mi ... *'Well, he told me ...'*
ay bin jagum sweg, ebrijing mayn, jaldu. *'I tossed in my swag and all my belongings.'*
melabad bin abum jabis --- binis.[17] *'We had a service.'*
dagbala na ngi. *'It's dark now, isn't it.'*
yu laygim Miss X? namu. gurdi! *'You like Miss X? No. Oh help!'* (on realising Miss X could have overheard this)
bubala mi. *'Poor old me.'*
bubala jedi *'the jetty'* (with nostalgia - it was a historic spot)

Conjunctions include an *'and'*, buji *'if'*, and anles *'unless'*.

TEXT EXAMPLES

Three textual examples are given here. Text A, very short, is extracted from conversation with Welwe, a Ridarrngu man who spoke no English, after I and another white woman had attended the women's part in the Kunapipi ceremony. Text B is an account by Barnabas Roberts of his arranging of a service at one of the cattle stations (he is a lay preacher). Text C is part of an account by Barnabas of hitching a ride on his way to Katherine from Nutwood Downs. Texts B and C were spoken for tape-recording in my presence. Of the three texts, Text C is the most heavily influenced by English in both phonology and vocabulary, and Text A the least. Note that in the context of a past tense narrative, bin, the overt signal of past tense, can often be omitted.

TEXT A

olgomen ol yumob gelele olwe ...
The old women, all of you were always giving the gelele call

melabad olbibul bin doŋ gud binji brabli yu bin album
we old people were really happy (that) you assisted

jad seremani.
that ceremony.

TEXT B

... jabis, jodbala wi abum. wi abum jodbala.
a service, a short one we'll have. We'll have a short one,

namu langbala. dumaji san. jan barnim. orayd.
not a long one, too much sun. The sun is hot. OK.

burrum jaya alabad - melabad bin abum jabis ---[17] finish.
After that they - we had a service

wad abad mani. melabad bajimab bla yu? wal, buji
What about money? Shall we fetch it for you? Well, if

yulabad layg. ay gan bulimad langa alabad. im blanga
you like. I can't take it to them (?). It's

yumbala mani. namu mayn. ay gan digidad burrum yulabad,
your money, not mine. I can't take it from you,

anles yulabad gibid mi mijalb. namu mayn. im
unless you give it to me yourselves. It's not mine. It

blanga jerj. wandi gu la jerj, bla
belongs to the church. It'll go to the church, for

album gandri bla yunmalabad. ay bin laygajad.
helping our country. I (explained it) like that.

orayd melabad bajimab. alabad im bajimab, burrum langa
OK we'll fetch it. They fetched it and put it on

debul. abda jad waya melaban finish. ay bin gejim.
the table. After that we finished. I took it.

ay bin degim la may camp. ay bin burrum langa pouch.
I took it to my camp. I put it in (my) pouch.

melaban silib. aba wig naja sandi muwa.
We slept. After a week, there was another Sunday.

melabad bin abum sabis.
We had a service.

TEXT C

dagbala na, dagbala na. jen, jen ledi im bin dalim mi,
It was dark then. Then the lady told me,

o olmen, olmen, jarran bas im mandi gamab abas nayn.
"Oh old man, old man, that bus is going to come at 9.30."

o wal du led fo mi, du go - du gul nayd daym.
"Oh well, too late for me, too co - too cold nighttime,

gulbala. ay bin dog. o yunmi wed. maydbi yunmi
it'll be cool", I said. "Oh wait, maybe we'll

bayndim muwa naja drag. wal im bin bayndim jad dubala
find another truck." Well, she found those two

men, bin gamab goda wid. dubala bin lodimab, degim la
men, they came with wheat. They loaded it up and took it to

kajarran. fo reskos, reshos. dubala bin shibdi,
Katherine, for racecourse - race horse. They moved and

megim rum bla mi. ay bin jagum sweg jaya, ebrijing mayn,
made room for me. I threw my swag in, all my things,

jaldu. wi bin gu, wi bin drabling raydab la larrama.
OK We went, we were travelling right up to Larrimah,

an wi bin sdop jaya fo lil wayl. dubala bin dringgimbad,
and we stopped there for a while. They were drinking

jad drongbala strong drink. drongbala dronggimbala ngugu.
that strong drink. strong intoxicating water

wada. balgim wada. (*Sharpe:*) balgi? (*Roberts:*) balgim.
water. bitter water. balgi? balgim.

nugudbala des yuno. megim gu sili. andaburrgiyunu
Bad taste you know, makes them silly. (Alawa) *After that*

ngulujala ---[17] dubala bin danim da lilwan
we went (a long way), they turned there(?) a little, and

bin hidim wadi. lim. (Alawa) duwi nari. im bin blagim
hit a tree, a limb, (Alawa) *leaning out. It blocked*

mi iya. an jad wadi rayd jaya. (Alawa) nambarla
me here, and that tree was right there. He said/it did(?)

gada nari. o wi gula dri jaya (Alawa) nari.
where it was. We were angry (?) that the tree was there.

wi bin jes misdim, wi bin andi ged gild jaya, an jad nugud.
We just missed it; we almost got killed there, which was no good.

NOTES

1. T.E. Dutton 1964. *Kanaka Contact Language in Queensland*, unpublished Field Report of the Queensland Speech Survey, University of Queensland.

2. E.H. Flint 1971. *The Aboriginal English of Informants in the 40-60+ Age Group in a far North-Western Queensland Community*, paper delivered at the 43rd A.N.Z.A.A.S. Congress.

3. D.C. Laycock 1970. "Pidgin English in New Guinea", in *English Transposed*, Ed. W.S. Ramson. Canberra: A.N.U. Press, p. 105.

4. Flint 1971, p. 5.

5. Björn H. Jernudd 1971. "Social Change and Aboriginal Speech Variation in Australia", *Anthropological Linguistics* 13.1.16-32.

6. Jernudd 1971, p. 20.

7. The Queensland Speech Survey of the University of Queensland, carried out by Flint, Dutton, Alexander and others.

8. Alawa has prenasalised stops, which can occur word initially. These are not common in Australian languages, nor are they present in PE except possibly in an occasional word borrowed from Alawa.

9. M.C. Sharpe 1972. *Alawa Phonology and Grammar*. Canberra: A.I.A.S. Australian Aboriginal Studies No. 37, also (on voice quality rather than intonation) Sharpe 1970. "Voice Quality: a Framework for Description and some Observations, *Pacific Linguistic Studies in Honour of Arthur Capell*, S.A. Wurm and D.C. Laycock (Eds.) (Pacific Linguistics Series C: 13), pp. 115-134, particularly pp. 124-127.

10. Sharpe 1972, 4.4.6, p. 37.

11. See Sharpe 1972, p. 57, also Glasgow 1964, pp. 109-111.

12. As there is no preposition before the pronoun, it appears the recipient is object or first referent of the verb as in Alawa, see

Sharpe 1972, 9.0.1 p. 79, 10.2.5 p. 96.

13. This corresponds to the case form used in the languages of the area, e.g. in Alawa, alawiɬyunu *'in Alawa'*, where the elative case, signalled by -yunu plus change in stem final vowel, is usually translated *'from'*.

14. This contraction of **melabad bin** to **melaban** was heard several times from Barnabas Roberts, but was not noted from other speakers.

15. **wandi** and **mandi** have been heard at times in the same context as **andi/anda**. I am not certain whether they are alternate forms or are semantically distinct from **andi/anda**.

16. More evidence may prove this tentative classification false. However, in Alawa such verbs do exist, e.g. ŋayelya *'I understand'*; ŋayi ŋayelya *'I don't understand'* (no mood inflection, unlike other verbs), ŋawuŋun *'I don't know'*.

17. Continuous action intonation on **jabis**, and on **ngulujala**.

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